Mario, Pauline, and Donkey Kong in: The Great Ape Escape!
Chapter 6: Jumpman Vs. Reality

Mario groaned as he set down his hefty plumber's toolkit. Then Luigi flopped through the front door, face first.

"Mamamia" Mario looked at her twin sons with sympathy. "So, how was your first week as official journeymen plumbers?"

Luigi gasped. "We… finally made it… Thank God, it's Friday!"

Mama Mario started a fresh pot of coffee. "We should do something to celebrate. If you have any new lady friends you want to invite, I'll make chicken tetrazzini, Grandma Mario style."

Mario stretched his back. "Mamamia! No more blind dates! We don't got time for new lady friends."

Mama Mario put a finger to her lips "Well, how about some *old* lady friends? Speaking of which, have you called Miss Verducci back? You really ought to check up on her, to make sure she's recovered from her terrible ordeal."

Mario groaned. "After what she went through, I doubt she'll want to see my mug ever again. Besides, I didn't get her number."

Mama Mario sighed. "You know, one of these years, I'd like to pass down a few of my own Grandma Mario recipes."

The rotary phone rang, and Luigi sprang to his feet to answer it. "Thank you for calling Super Mario Bros. Plumbing, it's-a me, Luigi, and if you need service–"

Luigi paused. "Oh, yeah, from the TV? Yup, he's here."

Luigi grinned at Mario. "It's for you, Jumpman!"

Raising an eyebrow, Mario accepted the phone. "Ayo?"

A sophisticated, female voice answered. "Hello, Mario. This is Pauline Verducci. I take it this is your office number?"

Mario glanced around the apartment, and noticed Mama Mario and Luigi staring at him with matching, sly expressions. "Eh, sort of a home office situation at the moment… Wait, how'd you get my number?"

Pauline giggled. “Remember those snazzy overalls you leant me? You left a business card in the pocket. I only just found it, after I did the laundry.”

“Oh, you still have those? I miss those pants. Real comfy, ain’t they?”

Pauline hesitated. “I’m not… wearing them at the moment.”

“Really? Then I take it you need a good plumber? Cuz’ the Super Mario Bros. are officially in business!”

Pauline hummed. “Well, if I have any plumbing related trouble, I’ll be sure to call the Super Mario Bros. But I was kind of hoping to catch up with just *one* of the Mario Bros… when he gets off the clock.”

Mario swallowed. “Yeah, Luigi’s a great guy. I’m happy to set you two up on a date.”

“Ha ha. It is to laugh. But if you want to set me up on a blind date, I’d much rather get to know that mysterious Jumpman character. Want to meet me at Punch-Out Pizzeria? You can give me his card.”

Mario swallowed. “Sure. I’m free right now if you want me to head over.”

“I’m–um–a little preoccupied at the moment. Better make it seven. My mama and I are…Eep?!”

Pauline gasped, and an older woman’s voice chimed it. “Danielle Pauline Verducci, what are you doing on the phone? You’re supposed to be in time out, young lady. You know what means, young lady. I’ll have to give you another trip across my–”

“Mama! I’m on the phone with Mario!!”

“The Jumpman? How lovely. Be sure to tell him thanks again, for saving your life, and to have you home by eleven. You may still be grounded, young lady, but if it’s to see that sweet young man, I’ll make an exception.”

“Wait, you really approve of him courting me? I thought–”

“But that doesn’t excuse you for trying to sneak out of the house on a date, while you’re on restriction.”

“But, Mama, I wasn’t going to sneak out! I was going to tell you, honest!”

“Hmm. I believe you, Polly. You’ve been making excellent progress on improving your behavior, so you’ve earned the benefit of the doubt. So, I’m only going to give you two spankings.”

“*Two* spankings? But, Mommy, I only broke one house rule!”

Over the phone, there was a grainy sound that sounded like a short scuffle. “No more arguing, Polly. One spanking for disregarding the rules on your phone privileges, and a second spanking for talking during your quiet time. Now, off with your—ah, of course, your butt’s already bare for time out. Where’s my head?”

“Please, Mommy! Not another spanking! At least, not while Mario is listening! I’ll die of embarrassment!"

“Hmm? Oh yes, Mister Mario, would you like to come over now? I believe your friendship with my daughter has had a notable positive influence on her behavior. I can wait til you get here to start Pauline’s spanking, if you want to give me a few pointers.”

Mario cleared his throat. “No, thank you, Ma’am. I’m sure you can handle it. I’d hate to interrupt your mother-daughter discussion.”

“My, what a gentleman! Pauline, say goodbye to the nice man, and tell him why you have to hang up.”

Pauline’s voice was slightly shaky, but she was making an effort to steady herself. “M-Mario? Thank you for taking my call. Now, if you’ll excuse me, my mother has to give—has to give me m-my—give me my two spankings for disobedience now. I’m s-so, so s-sorry to have bothered you.”

“You’re not a bother, Pauline. Keep your chin up, kiddo. See you at seven.”

Pauline’s voice gushed. “Th-thank you, Mario. You’re such a good friend! I’ll meet you at Punch-Out Pizz–aaah! Aaw-haaaaa!”

For a few moments, there was the unmistakable sound of a bare-bottom spanking in progress, before Pauline quickly hung up.

Mario turned to find Mama Mario and Luigi, sharing a glance. Then Mama started singing, “When the moon, hits your eye! Like a big, pizza pie!”

Luigi joined in, and they sang in perfect harmony. “That’s amore!”

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Mario pulled out Pauline’s chair for her, and she sat down gingerly. A life-sized, signed poster of Mike Tyson hung behind them.

Mario took his own seat, feeling sheepish. “You holding up all right?”

Pauline winced. “Just a little sore. Thank you, Mario. I was completely mortified at first, but you have a knack for making a girl feel… safe. I was afraid you’d tease me.”

Mario shrugged. “Ain’t right to tease a lady. So, I guess you’ve been busy since that complete disaster of a blind date.”

Pauline nodded. “I should hope so. The City of New York has finally agreed to extradite Donkey Kong and his son back to their natural habitat on Kong Island. That’s been a logistical nightmare. The big lug keeps breaking every cage we try to put him in with his bare hands.”

Mario nodded, then glanced up at the television. Cable news was showing footage of Donkey Kong, seething with rage as he was stuffed in a cage that was slightly too small for him. “Poor guy. If only he knew you was trying to help him.”

“Well, he is only a gorilla, after all.”

The TV screen started to fritz out, distorting the image of Donkey Kong on the screen.

“Man, they gotta get that thing fixed.” Mario drummed his fingers. He liked Pauline. He really did. But what exactly was he supposed to talk about?

The moment hung for a few awkward, painful seconds. Finally, Pauline sighed. “You know, this is nice. My life gets so busy, I need a night out once in a while, with no drama.”

“Yeah. Just a nice, quiet… Um, wait, so this is a date night? Like, an official second date?”

Pauline leaned forward in her seat, and rested her chin on her folded hands. “...Hmm, but can you call our first meeting a proper first date, after the gorilla attack?”

“So, that makes tonight–what? Blind first date, take two?”

Pauline giggled, glancing up at the TV. The image of Donkey Kong was now stuttering, and there was a grainy picture of Pauline next to the monkey. Were they still replaying that old footage on cable, after all these months? Mario blinked. “Huh. You and Donkey Kong look different on TV. Did one of you get a haircut?”

Pauline glanced at the TV, looking annoyed, then playfully walked her fingers toward Mario’s hand. “I’d like to have just one night without having to think about my very public, bare-bottom spanking on national television. No hairy gorillas, and absolutely no spankings… Unless, of course, you’re planning to keep me out past curfew?”

Mario waved a gloved hand, and the waiter set down a piping hot pizza pie between them. “Nah. I think you’ve been spanked enough. Quiet night sounds good to me too.”

Suddenly, the sound on the television blared to max volume, and the distorted image of Donkey Kong and Pauline on the screen grew bigger. A giant gorilla and a little girl seemed to slam against the glass from behind the screen. Then, impossibly, the image expanded past the edge of the flickering screen itself.

Reflexively, Mario leapt to shield Pauline, before the gorilla and the little girl smashed through the glass and came crashing down onto Mario and Pauline's table. There was a terrific explosion of pizza slices, napkins, and powdered parmesan cheese.

Pauline spluttered, scooping off a gooey-slice of extra-cheesy pizza off her face, before she screamed. "Donkey Kong? Nooo! What are you doing here?"

The little girl groaned, pulling a pizza slice away from her own face. Her motion was an identical mirror of Pauline's with a slight delay. She was barefoot, and dressed in baggy jeans and an artfully-torn, red, sleeveless skirt shirt. "Donkey Kong? What are we doing here? Where's King–"

Mario grabbed the little girl by her arm and scooped her up. "Little girl? Get away from that monster! He's gonna hurt–"

The weirdly-friendly-looking Donkey Kong snarled with rage, and grabbed Mario by the collar, lifting him with ease? "Ook oooh!"

The little girl flailed her arms. "Wait, wait, don't hurt him, Donkey Kong! I think he's a good guy! Put him down!"

Donkey Kong glared at Mario, and slowly set him down. "Ooo-kaay!"

Mario blinked, and slowly set down the little girl behind him. "Pauline, see if you can talk this big guy down."

The little girl blinked. "I just did. He was about to knock you–*Pow!*–to the moon."

Pauline held up a shaky hand. "That's not Donkey Kong!"

The little girl stomped her bare foot, and glared up at Pauline. "Nu uh! He is too Donkey Kong!"

Pauline stomped her high heel, in a perfect imitation of the little girl. "Nu uh! His fur's the wrong color! "

Donkey Kong examined his hairy arms. "Oof wook, ookoo fooh?"

[Translation: "And what's wrong with the color of my fur?"]

Then, the little girl did a double take. “Wait a minute… You’re Pauline… And he’s *not* Donkey Kong… And Mike Tyson is still in *Punch-Out?* So we’re in the 1980s? Aaaaagh, not again! We tore through the fabric of time!”

Mario blinked. “What are you talking about? This makes no sense.”

Pauline did a double take, exactly like the little girl. “Wait a minute…that’s how I dressed when I was younger! You’re me! You’re an alternate version of me from another dimension in space-time!”

Pauline and little Pauline both screamed in unison.

Pauline grabbed Mario by the shoulder. “Mario! Help me!”

Little Pauline grabbed onto Donkey Kong by the leg. “Donkey Kong! Save me! …Aw, land sakes, me and old Pauline are synchronizing to a different beat. This is bad!”

Pauline put her hands on her hips. “Hey, I’m not old! I’m still in my twenties!”

“Yeah! I’m *super* old here! But, wait, how can I be old if it’s only the 1980s? Where’s your Donkey Kong?”

Mario cut in. “He’s on his way back to Kong Island, along with his kid. Donkey Kong Jr.”

Donkey Kong slapped his face with both hands. “Groo-roo Croon-kee Kong?”
[Translation: “Grampa Kranky Kong?”]

Little Pauline gasped. “Huh? But that happened before Donkey Kong Junior *Junior* here was even born. Heck, his Dad was still just a kid back in the 80s, like me!”

“Ooh, noo-koo! Foo-koo!”

[Translation: “That can only mean this is a pseudo-parallel continuity from our own world, with its own dimensional frequency!”]

Little Pauline was trembling. “It’s even worse than that, Donkey Kong! We’ve created a Grandfather paradox!”

Donkey Kong stroked his chin. “Oof, Groo-roo Croon-kee Kong-goo oof-ooh ook oozoo?”

[Translation: “Well, Grandpa Kranka Kong always was kinda off his rocker!”]

The older Pauline blinked twice, then dug her fingers through her hair. “Wait, if you’re me, and he’s Donkey Kong’s grandson, and Donkey Kong’s grandson hasn’t been born yet, then how did

I get kidnapped by Donkey Kong *Senior* in my *early* twenties *before* meeting Donkey Kong's *grandson* when I was still a *tweenager?"*

Little Pauline mirrored the gesture. "Exactly! There's no way to resolve this contradiction! We're completely screwed!"

Then, every single thing in the Pizzeria started to float in the air, except for Mario, Pauline, little Pauling, and Donkey Kong Junior, Jr.

Little Pauline screeched. "Ack! Now the plot hole is forming a singularity!"

Early-twenties Pauline screeched. "But that will form a black hole, instantly spaghettifying the entire planet as it pulls it into the infinite void, along with us!"

The cracked TV screen flickered to life, and behind the static, a dark shape began to appear at the center of the picture, slowly expanding outwards.

Little Pauline started dancing on her feet. "Our only hope is to establish a fixed point in continuity between our two dimensions, then get the heck out of here!"

Twenty-something Pauline clapped her hands. "That might just work! We'll need something strong, that can unite our two universes in perfect harmony, like the power of love! Hurry! Kiss me Mario!"

Little Pauline stuck out her tongue. "That won't work, ya bimbo! You'd have to kiss Donkey Kong!"

Donkey Kong stuck out his tongue. "Smoo-choo, boo-boo? Oog! Koong coo-coo goog smoo-choo bum Can-dee Kong-goo!"

["Kiss a girl? Yuck! I only like kissies from Candy Kong!"]

Little Pauline waved her arms. "And I am *not* kissing a *boy!* Yuck! No offense, mister, but you all have cooties!"

Not-quite-in-her-thirties-yet Pauline stomped her foot. "This is ridiculous! Mario, I demand that you kiss me, at once!"

Mario held up a hand, posing heroically. "No, Pauline. I will *not* kiss this child. It would be morally incorrect."

"Not her! Kiss *me*, you bozo!"

Little Pauline shook her head. “Nah, he’s right. See, the Bob-Hoskins-lookalike-contest-winner here is the hero of your world. For this to work, the hero and the heroine of each dimension would have to trade places and something all noble and heroic, ya know, to restore harmony and stuff. Donkey Kong is married, so kissing you is definitely out, lady.”

Donkey Kong gesticulated wildly, making a series of grunts that expressed something roughly to the effect of: “Well, if I’m not kissing her, and she’s not kissing me, and you’re not kissing him, and he’s not kissing you, what’s the plan?”

Little Pauline sighed. “Then we’ve no other choice. Donkey Kong, I’m afraid you’ll have to give old-me a good spanking. And Mister Mustache, you’ll have to spank me.”

“Old-me” Pauline shielded her bottom with both hands. “Spank me? Why does it have to be a spanking?”

Little Pauline bowed her head, and shuffled her feet. “Because even though I *hate* spankings, I’m the one responsible for Donkey Kong, so that means I’m the one who has to pay the price for telling him to punch a hole through reality.”

“But why *me*?!?”

Little Pauline shrugged. “Cuz you’re me, too.”

Mario knelt and put a hand on Little Pauline’s shoulder. “But Pauline, you don’t deserve a spanking.”

Little Pauline froze, then stomped her foot, pouting. “Look, man, if you don’t spank me, the entire universe is going to implode. Isn’t that reason enough?”

Mario shook his head. “No. It’s not right to strike an innocent child. I won’t do it.”

The not-an-innocent-child Pauline clutched her buttocks tight. “And I don’t *want* another spanking, either!”

Little Pauline bowed her head. “But, mister, you have to listen… I’m not an innocent child. See, the only reason me and Donkey Kong got into trouble in the first place is…Well, I ran away from music camp.”

Mario patted little Pauline’s shoulder. “I see. And have you talked to your parents about that yet?”

Little Pauline shuffled her feet. “I want to tell them, as soon as I get home. But… I have to get home to them first. Please, mister, you have to spank me. You’re my only hope.”

Mario shook his head. “But, Pauline, I don’t have your parents’ permission to spank you.”

Older Pauline stiffened, then slowly dropped her hands from her bottom. “Yes you do, Mario. They gave you permission to spank me, if I bratted it up on our date, and… And I am giving you permission to spank me, too.”

There was a rush of wind. In a flurry, the floating paper napkins started flying into the empty space behind the broken glass, and disappeared into nothingness.

Little Pauline gasped. “If we’re doing this, we’d better do it now. Get to spanking!”

Older Pauline nodded, and slowly lifted her skirt, revealing a scandalous pair of red, lacy, Victoria’s Secret lingerie. “I hate it when I’m right. Come on, Donkey Kong, just pretend my butt is a pair of bongos.”

Dropping her panties down to her ankles, Older Pauline stepped out of them sheepishly, then settled herself on top of Donkey Kong’s knee, in a chest-to-chest position. The big gorilla looked at Pauline with sympathy, and patted her buttocks with each of his huge hands. “Ooo-kee?”

Pauline nodded, touched by the gentleness of the gesture. “Yes… It’s okay.”

Mario snatched a floating chair out of midair before it could be sucked into the vortex, and seated himself on it, patting his lap. “All right, Pauline, it’s time for your spanking. Across my knee. It will all be over soon.”

Little Pauline dropped her jeans, then hopped up and onto Mario’s lap. She glanced back nervously at her Donkey-Kong-themed underoos. “Um… will you be spanking me on my bare bottom, Mister?”

Mario shook his head, and patted Pauline across the seat of her pants. “No, that won’t be necessary. You’re not a bad kid. You just made a mistake. Now, grit your teeth, and hold on tight to the chair.”

Older Pauline stiffened, then glanced back at her bare behind. “Wait, was that an option? In that case, I don’t–”

Donkey Kong and Mario delivered the first spank to the two versions of Pauline, then began to spank at a slow, steady pace, in perfect synch.

Instantly, little Pauline started shedding soft tears, but more from remorse than pain. Mario delivered firm swats, but he was careful to control his strength.

In contrast, Older Pauline was also crying, but more from desperation. As he used both hands to spank Pauline to a steady congo rhythm, Donkey Kong's expression never changed, his eyes full of gentle, loving concern. "Ooo-eee, Poo-ree! Tee-nee boo-boo, bum-bum tum-tum."

[Translation: "It's okay, Pauline. It's only a little spanking."]

Pauline howled as she felt the tremendous, shuddering slaps flattening her buttocks with each hefty blow, producing an echoing roll of thunderclaps. Unfortunately, Donkey Kong didn't know his own strength.

Meanwhile, little Pauline was weeping softly. "I'm sorry, Mister! For causing so much trouble! I'm sorry for running away!"

Mario nodded, and paused the spanking. "I know you are, Pauline, but this has to be a lasting reminder for you. I'm giving you ten more swats. Take a deep breath, and prepare yourself for it. Tell me when you are ready."

At the mention of the word "ten," Donkey Kong paused, and started counting his fingers, looking confused.

Little Pauline gasped for air, her chest shaking, and calmed her breathing. "I'm ready, sir."

As Mario raised his hand high, Donkey Kong finally shrugged, and together they both delivered the final set of ten spanks, which were the hardest yet. Both Paulines melted down into uncontrolled sobbing.

Mario set little Pauline on her feet. She was so busy wiping her eyes, she forgot to pull up her jeans. Noticing this, Mario carefully helped her pull her pants back up, and patted little Pauline on the top of her head. Little Pauline dove into Mario's chest to hug him tight.

Watching this with interest, Donkey Kong picked up older Pauline's panties, pinching them delicately between his meaty fingers. Then, Donkey Kong clumsily pulled the panties up Pauline's legs, accidentally giving her a slight wedgie, before he let the elastic waistband snap back into place.

Pauline tried to rub her bottom, flinched as she realized that was a very bad idea, then massaged it gently with only the tips of her fingers. "Did it work?"

The static faded on the TV, revealing a scene of an expansive landscape. Little Pauline gasped. "It worked! Thanks, mister! Now we can finally go home!"

Donkey Kong scooped up little Pauline. As he carried her away, Little Pauline peeped over the gorilla's broad shoulder to wave goodbye. "And old-me… Sorry for getting you into trouble. When I grow up to be you, I hope I'll still be as brave as I am today. Meaning you."

With a hoot of unbridled joy, Donkey Kong leapt into the TV, shrinking as they entered the expansive world. Then, the glowing shards of glass of the TV screen floated back into place, and were repaired.

Instantly, all the people and objects floating in the Pizzeria dropped back into place. The people went about eating, as if nothing strange had just happened. There were a few muttered complaints about the napkin trays all being empty.

Mario looked at Pauline, then sat back at their chair. “So… want to split a dessert?”

Pauline tried to sit down, then second guessed herself. “Can I take a rain check on that? I *really* don’t want to get home after bedtime tonight.”

“Sure, I’ll walk you home.”

Pauline brushed a lock of hair away from her face. “Thank you, Mario. You know, it’s strange, but somehow, you never make me feel humiliated, even when I know I should be completely, and utterly, embarrassed at myself. You really don’t look down on me, knowing I still get spanked by my parents at my age?”

“What’s there to be embarrassed about? You’re a class act, Miss Verducci, not to mention…”

Mario faltered as he took a closer look at Pauline’s hair. “Hang on, since when are you a blond. Weren’t you just a brunette?”

Pauline brushed aside her suddenly sun-yellow hair, looking rather satisfied with herself, then fumbled with her purse. “So, you finally noticed? I *was* a brunette. I got a perm, of course. Now I’m a goldilocks again…Oops!”

Pauline dropped her purse, and the clasp broke, sending pens and cards flying.

Mario knelt to help Pauline collect her things. “Again? So, what were you originally?”

Pauline affected a look of offense, but couldn’t hide her smile. “That’s a rather forward question to ask a lady, considering this is only our first official date. I’ll tell you what, take me out on a third date, and I’ll tell you everything you want to know about my natural hair color. Or my name’s not Louise ‘Polly’ James.”

On autopilot, Mario’s hand scooped up something. As he held it up, Mario recognized it as Pauline’s driver’s license, then did a double-take. In the photo, Pauline was a brunette, and her name was listed as, “Pauline Daniella Verducci.”

Then, slowly, unmistakably, the photo of Pauline changed into a blond, and the letters of her name rearranged themselves: “Louise Pollyane James.”

She batted her eyes at Mario. “Something the matter, big guy?”

Mario smiled, then handed her back her driver’s license.

Somehow, he knew that everything was going to be okay, from now on.

[The End]